7: Shklovsky -- 34-35 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 431, 574, 609

"As my hut [RCH: in Sredne Kolymsk] was directly opposite the Assembly House I could not complain of neglect on the part of visitors. The Yakuts soon found out that we never sent them away, and the door had hardly closed after one visitor before another came in. Some of them had an artless way of obtaining things. One would come and stand in the doorway, bowing.

'What do you want, friend?' I asked.

The 'friend' takes out from his breast a gnawed piece of yukala or half-cured fish and offers it to me, and it would appear that he has travelled 500 versts in order to make this present. After this the 'friend' not only feels quite at home, but even considers that he has placed me under an obligation. He removes [35] his eared cap, loosens his belt, sits down and, when tea is given him, he mentions that he is very fond of bread and vodka. He silently pushes his empty tobacco pouch forward, as a hint that it requires filling; then, taking my knife, suggests an exchange, the transaction being very profitable for the 'friend'. Next, taking my comb, he uses it on his stiff, harsh, doubtful-looking hair, then, after asking for several other trifling things, he unwillingly takes his departure, casting a lingering glance around to see whether there is anything more for which he can ask. We feared these Yakuts with their presents as we feared fire. But with such guests what could be done? We lacked courage to show them the door."

19: Kharuzin -- 45-46 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut -1-2
116, 178, 421, 431, 583, 614

In the Sbornik obychnago prava Sibirskikh inorodtser (Compilation of the Customary Law of the Siberian Natives), issued by Mr. Samokvasov (pp. 221-22), reference is made to the rule of the Yakut customary law, whereby "the dowry is paid as compensation to the bridegroom and his relatives for the payment of the kalym ; the dowry is given in cattle, clothes and sometimes in money, amounting to one half of the stipulated kalym; the bride may not have a dowry valued at less that half the kalym, while a larger dowry, sometimes exceeding the entire kalym (which very rarely happens), depends upon the will of her parents." Mr. Sieroszewski also remarks that the payment made to the parents of the bride as well as the gifts presented to the relatives and match-makers by the bridegroom are subsequently returned to the bridegroom in the form of dowry and gifts. It is only the expenses connected with the reception and "other insignificant additional expenditures" that the bridegroom pays without being reimbursed. Unlike the kalym, the dowry does not constitute an indispensable element in marriage. Although the relatives of the bridegroom receive the bride rather coolly if she brings to her new household less than was anticipated, and although quarrels and lawsuits ensue if she brings a dowry smaller than agreed upon, in some cases the parents do not give any dowry even if they receive a considerable kalym. Public opinion censures such actions, but the mere fact that such actions take place gives support to the opinions of Mr. Sieroszewski that dowries are a comparatively late institution among the Yakuts; on the

other hand, this explains the fact that up to the present time, according to Mr. Pripuzov it was the custom in the Yakutsk region not to make arrangements concerning the dowry and that the size of the dowry depended completely on the good will of the parents. [46]

The return of the whole or a part of the kalym to the clan or family of the bridegroom is the ordinary source of the dowry; this practice develops principally in the period of decline of the custom of purchasing one's wife, when the formerly dominant custom of purchasing the bride gradually loses its inherent sense and continues to maintain itself through tradition. But the Yakuts of the locality investigated by Mr. Pripuzov apparently have not yet elaborated definite rules, regulating the size of the dowry: all depends on the will of the father, which carries us to that period of development of the dowry, when the latter did not yet constitute a stable institution, and was given by the parents out of a desire to better the position of the daughter given in marriage in her husband's clan group by the return of a part of the kalym, to dispose the strange clan group favorably toward the young woman. Obviously, in this form the dowry has nothing in common with a distribution to the girl of a part of the property of her kin group. Her family does not deprive itself of the smallest part of its own property: the marriage is consummated at the expense of the bridegroom, and the family of the bride only denies itself, and that often only to a certain extent, the acquisition of the property which is a product of the sale of the daughter into a strange clan.

19: Kharuzin -- 63 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 431, 585

The making of gifts is practiced chiefly in connection with weddings. The presents given to the young couple become part of their personal property, and continues to be theirs after the separation of the bridegroom from the parental family. These presents are usually made one year after the wedding, at the time of the visit paid to the relatives of the bride, who received presents at the time of the wedding. The couple take with them vodka and various articles of hospitality. Convention dictates that the present made to the couple should exceed the one obtained at the wedding. The reciprocal giving of presents has at present become so much a part of custom that, according to Mr. Pripuzov, if someone should obtain a present, and does not give a present in return, the present should be returned.

24: Wrangell--192-193 G-3 (1820-23) 1842 Yakut
116, 177, 431, 756, 771

"They [RCH: i.e., the population on the Aniuk River which includes Yakuts] have all been baptized, and conform to the usages of the Russian Church at least once a year, when the different settlements are visited by the priest of Nishne Kolymsk, for the purpose of solemnizing marriages, christenings, and burials, and of administering the Lord's Supper. The journey is a very difficult and laborious one, as it includes a cir-
[193] cuit of many hundred wersts, at the worst season of the year, and in a wild and desert country. It is, however, a very advantageous journey to the priest in a pecuniary point of view, from the number of presents which he receives; it being not uncommon for him to return with two or three sledges laden with the most costly furs, as sables, ermines, foxes, &c."

38: Dobell--38-39 G-2 (1812-13) 1830 Yakut
116, 114, 431, 556, 651, 661

"The chiefs and head men are very fond of making presents to the Chief and other officers of Government, because it is for them a very profitable business. When a present is made, a collection takes place from all the Yakuts of the Ouloos; and I have been assured the Prince generally collects at least twice the [39] amount of the present, taking care to put the surplus in his own pocket. This, and low wages together, have reduced the poorer class of Yakuts to a state of slavery; for, as they cannot pay their debts, they are obliged to serve those hard masters on their own terms. The tribes of Yakuts being now nearly all Christians and civilised, they ought to be put on the same footing with Russians, which would tend in a great measure to do away with a number of the abuses actually existing. Above all, measures should be adopted to abolish venality and peculation: that course seems necessary as well for the preservation as the prosperity of Siberia. The privileged classes should not be suffered to trade without taking out a license, which is actually the case, and whereby the merchant is injured, who pays the crown, and has to strive against an unfair competition."

/172 cont./

I brought out my magnetic bars and angled with them, as well as with my pocketknife magnetized on them, for needles scattered on the table, to the great delight of those present, which was made known with an abundance of extraordinary interjections, in which these primitive peoples /173/ are able to accomplish a great deal. The fact that they could not do the same thing with their own knives, made of soft iron, no matter how much I touched them with my amazing bars, seemed particularly miraculous to them. Czekanowsky decided that if he ever traveled through these regions again he would provide himself with various magnetic playthings for barter.

The compass caused almost even greater astonishment when they discovered that with this instrument one could find one's way in the tundra even during a snow storm. Their knowledge of astronomy does not seem to be very great; as far as was to be understood through the interpreter, the elder knew only the Great Bear, about which he maintained that "it moves its tail," but, with clear skies, experienced tundra guides are said to be able to orient themselves by the stars.

The statements of the elder completely confirmed all the praise that Chitrow bestowed on the inhabitants of these regions. Their love of their fellow men is positively unheard of and reminds one of patriarchal times and conditions. Not only do the rich never abandon their poorer fellow tribesmen in case of need, they feed and clothe them, and if, as often happens, the reindeer fall prey to wolves, they replace the loss for the ones robbed -- Chitrow says that a Tungus of his acquaintance was supported in this way for three successive years and that such support may amount to 30 reindeer, a sizable fortune here -- there even prevails a custom whereby the hunting booty, especially slain reindeer, is shared among all the companions or family members; the pelt is given to each member in turn -- with the exception of the fortunate hunter, who fears losing his talent for hunting if he violates this custom held sacred by the fathers. The two /174/ Tungus accompanying us made peculiar faces at

/185 cont./

233 that had brought us here were led a few versts farther to the right
[182] shore of the Olenék, where there was more food for them. Lack of fodder for the reindeer is the principal reason why the inhabitants here do not keep them as draft animals, but instead use dogs, which, because of the great quantity of fish food that they need, are very troublesome, particularly in years when fish are not abundant. Our host here has a /186/ splendid herd of reindeer, which, however, he keeps with friends in the forest region; aside from the lack of food, the wolves, for which we too had to keep a nightly watch during the trip on the tundra, and in the winter the violent snowstorms, are a danger to the reindeer.

123 During our stay we received many presents of fish and arctic fox skins -- probably not the best, inasmuch as it was seen that we were not experts -- indeed, even garments that were no longer new, which, however, we refused. The people were generously compensated for this with tobacco, tea, sugar, ammunition, axes, and similar articles, in spite of their protests that they did not
● 431 expect anything at all in return. The custom of giving and re-
571 ceiving presents during visits is widespread everywhere here, and while it is possible that those in higher positions, especially the local administrative officials, do not count on any return gifts, those of the same standing not only desire, but demand them, and it even happens, as Chitrow tells, that such mutual assurances of esteem end in lawsuits because one party is dissatisfied.

122 On the morning of October 23 our narten stood before the door ready for travel -- nothing held us in the north any longer; we left the village at a rapid trot, accompanied for a stretch by the population running alongside. We were going south, following the birds of passage that had hastened on ahead of us long ago -- they had reached their goal long since, but we were still far away, frightfully far! Our stations were the same as before
[137] up to the Pur; we traveled as quickly as possible, since nothing held us any longer. Czekanowsky only took along a couple of trunks from stunted larches, which were growing in the middle of the tundra in the protection of river valleys; the largest was as thick as an arm and barely ten feet tall, but of a considerable age.

(naturally, subordinate in turn to the tsarist administration); those who sat at the head of them, the elders and chief elders, were either toyons in origin, or mere servants who obeyed them implicitly. The clan and nasleg meetings (munnyakh), at which the poor people dared not say a word, played the same part.

Thus, the frequently expressed opinion that the clan structure was retained among the Yakuts right up to the 20th century is a profound error.

Just as erroneous is the opinion of certain ethnographers that there were elements of the matriarchate among the Yakuts. This view is based on the fact that there was a division of the aga-uus (paternal clan) into smaller groups, iye-uuha (literally, "maternal clan"). The latter do indeed figure in the 19th-century official documents under the name of "tribal clans." But, despite the Yakut name, these small groups were not genuine maternal clans; kinship and descent were not reckoned on the female but on the male side. The name "iye-uus" is evidently to be explained by the fact that these subdivisions were descended from one clan progenitor, though from different wives.

More direct, although also more or less modified, survivals of primitive-communal relations were retained by the Yakuts in certain characteristic customs, such as, for example, elements of collectivism in fishing. The Yakuts retained the custom of communal net-fishing in rivers and lakes belonging to individual naslegs and clans. The catch, which was often an extremely abundant one, was divided on the spot among those taking part as well as among the onlookers (though the latter received less, admittedly). In the north there was a similar custom for moulting geese, which were caught by tens of thousands.

The custom of mutual gifts (belekh) was also very archaic. The Yakut would visit a relative or friend, sometimes at a far-away spot, and receive a gift from his host, as though in gratitude for the visit; the gift would be a horse, saddle, a certain amount of meat, and so on, and in return, according to custom, he would invite the giver to visit him, although it might be a long time after, and present him with a gift of approximately the same value. These gifts were often timed to coincide with weddings, though they were sometimes presented independently.

The custom of hospitality was also observed. Hosts had to regale a guest visiting them, even though he might be a complete stranger, with the same food that they ate themselves. Since this custom clashed with the capitalist psychology, reared on commercial relationships, it was regarded in many cases as an inevitable evil which everyone tried to avoid in every way he could; this often resulted in comic episodes in which the hosts (more often than not wealthy people) hastily hid away the food they were about to eat when they saw a guest approaching, while the latter resorted to various tricks in order to find where the food was hidden. According to the old custom, the host was also obliged to invite relatives and neighbors whenever a beast was slaughtered and to offer them meat. Nonobservance of this custom gave rise to public censure.

Apart from these individual customs, the Yakut society admittedly retained the characteristic, half-conscious patriarchal ideology, which was clearly not a reflection of their true relationships, although it served the interests of the toyons, who knew how to make use of it. The toyons liked to style themselves the forefathers, heads and sponsors of their clans; they skillfully fomented various interclan quarrels (usually